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U.S. Department of Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service

Wetland Management: A Team Effort!

INTRODUCTION

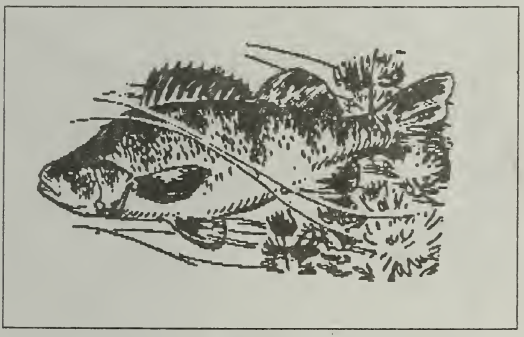
The Forest Service seeks to protect and enhance the functions and values of wetland ecosystems. This brochure briefly describes how the Forest Service works with other Federal agencies to achieve its objective.

The Forest Service (FS) manages wetland ecosystems on national forests. The U. S. Department of Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) inventories and maps the nation's wetland ecosystems. The Department of Defense, Army Corps of Engineers (COE) and the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) protect wetlands through a permit process.

Wetlands are a transition between aquatic and upland areas. Aquatic areas are always covered in water, and upland areas are rarely, if ever, flooded. Wetlands are defined in several ways, partly because of their transitional nature. Each agency, based on its mission, defines wetlands. In fact, the principal Federal agencies that manage wetlands define these areas in slightly different ways. However, these differences do not preclude agency cooperation. Each definition recognizes the common attributes of wetlands as plants (hydrophytes), soils (hydric soils) and hydrology (saturation and flooding).

WETLAND FUNCTIONS AND VALUES

The FS manages forested wetland ecosystems for (1) flood control, (2) drought moderation, (3) habitats for fish, wildlife and plants, with particular attention to rare and endangered species, (4) recreation, such as fishing and hunting, (5) water quality and quantity, with particular attention to groundwater aquifers, (6) wood fiber, (7) archeological and cultural resources and (8) visual resources. National forest land management plans describe the desired future condition for wetlands. They contain management practices, direction, and "standards and guidelines" for wetland management. As forest land management plans are implemented, objectives for the functions and values for specific wetlands are prepared. The effects of management upon these objectives are evaluated, monitored and documented.

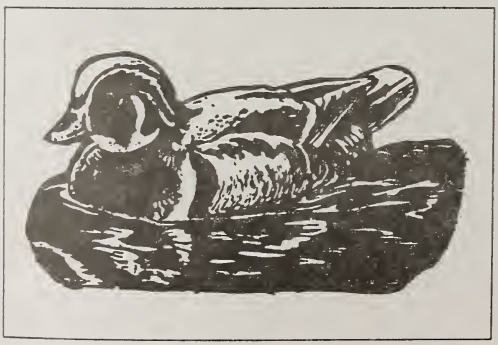


WETLAND MAPPING AND DELINEATION

The FWS maps wetlands primarily by using stereoscopic analysis of high-altitude aerial photographs (color infrared). The areas delineated on the aerial photos are transferred to U. S. Geological Survey topographic maps.

Wetlands are identified on the photographs based on vegetation, visible hydrology and geography. To be as consistent as possible, wetland identification is guided by *Classification of Wetlands and Deep-Water Habitats of the United States*, by Lewis M. Cowardin, et al. 1979. The maps display conditions existing at the time that the photographs were taken and may reflect errors that cannot be avoided when using aerial photographs. Thus, a detailed, on-the-ground and historical analysis of a specific site may change the wetland boundaries shown on the map. The purpose for the inventory and mapping is to promote wise use of wetlands by providing information to decision makers, planners, industry, private organizations, universities, colleges and all levels of government.

The FS uses the FWS maps to delineate wetland ecosystems. Using forest soil, water and vegetation data, the FWS maps are verified. The maps are one of several tools used to determine size, location, scarcity and management of various wetland ecosystems on national forest lands. The maps are also used to help focus further work on identifying which portions of the wetland ecosystems are subject to regulation as "Waters of the United States" (Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, 1977).



INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

The FS works with the COE, EPA, State and local agencies to determine suitable practices for wetland ecosystems.

The COE and EPA are authorized through Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, 1977, to issue permits for dredge-and-fill activities in wetlands. The purpose is to protect the functions and values of wetlands that are "Waters of the United States." All three criteria (hydric soil, hydrophytic plants and water regime) must be present before a wetland is subject to Section 404 regulation. "Normal Silvicultural Practices" are permitted within wetlands subject to Section 404 regulations (36CFR Parts 320-330).

To prevent permanent degradation or loss of the water quality functions and values of wetlands, some States are preparing and implementing "Best Management Practices" for forested wetlands. These practices are designed to meet the provisions of Section 319 of the Clean Water Act of 1987.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about FS wetland management, contact your local Forest Service office or:

Soil, Water and Air Management
USDA Forest Service
Southern Region
1720 Peachtree Road, N.W.
Atlanta, GA 30367-9102
Telephone (404) 347-2692

For more information about FWS wetland inventory maps, contact the following Regional Wetland Inventory Coordinators:

John Hefner
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Richard B. Russell Bldg.
75 Spring Street SW
Atlanta, GA 30303
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